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French papers show how Soviet agency steals industrial information

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PARIS — The Soviet VPK works much like any other government procurement agency: It takes orders from its clients in Moscow, and sends its staff out to get whatever is requested.

What is different are that the VPK apparently is the Soviet agency in charge of industrial and scientific espionage; that the Soviet military establishment is its main client, and that its staff includes senior Soviet diplomats abroad.

Documents leaked by French intelligence sources to French journalists and published in recent days suggest that with the VPK's guidance Soviet diplomats system-

atically collect both published and secret industrial information in the West that the Soviet military uses to take shortcuts in weapons development.

A French newsmagazine, Le Point, said that France's expulsion of 47 Soviet officials in April, 1983, came shortly after the French counterintelligence services gave French President Francois Mitterrand evidence of widespread scientific and military spying tied to the VPK.

In a separate incident a few months earlier, the magazine said, the French Embassy in Moscow discovered that the Soviets had secretly bugged the embassy's telex machines for five years. This allegedly provided the

Soviets copies of virtually all diplomatic messages between the embassy and Paris.

When the diplomats were kicked out, Mr. Mitterrand apparently had detailed information about Soviet activities, and the choice of the officials who were expelled may have made the accuracy of France's information clear to the Soviets.

A spokesman for the Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on the allegations about either the bugging or industrial spying.

The Soviet Embassy here protested the publication of an article in the newspaper *Le Monde* about the VPK and demanded that the government prohibit

publication of a second article, which has since appeared. The articles are part of "an anti-Soviet campaign" and cite "fake" documents, the embassy said.

French journalists say French intelligence services obtained documents outlining the VPK's work from an officer in the KGB.

The VPK bureaucratically counts documents stolen and secrets gained as a sort of profit, and compares the numbers to those the previous years to see if there has been an overall loss or gain. The worth of the secrets is added up, so that, for 1980, the bureaucracy could calculate that stolen know-how saved the country about \$450 million.

Those numbers and the ac-

count that follows are based on French translations of Russian-language documents that appeared in the French press.

VPK stands for Military Industrial Committee and has representatives from 12 ministries hungry for modern equipment and methods: ministries for aeronautics, electronics, chemicals, oil and gas, shipbuilding and military hardware.

They and offices within the Soviet secret police regularly pinpoint their precise needs — this kind of chip, that type of wing, this kind of management plan — and transmit them to the VPK.

It sets the final priorities and targets: The KGB provides the means, but apparently the VPK

provides the direction. For the period 1979-1980, it enumerated 244 areas of interest. Soviet embassies then get lists of what the VPK wants and are expected to try to satisfy them through what the documents call "special channels" — that is, espionage.

The Soviet aeronautics industry, for example, reported getting 156 samples and 3,896 technical documents in 1979 from "the acquiring departments."

About 60 percent of the information gathered in 1980 came from the United States. Another 10 percent came from West Germany, 8 percent from France, 7.5 percent from Great Britain and 3 percent from Japan.